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as Lady Teazle and Sir Peter Teazle in *The School for Scandal*, which opened at the New Theatre on 20th January, too late for review this month. *Richard III* followed on 26th January, and the third production of the season, *Antigone*, will have its first night on 10th February.

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February 1949

FOLLOWING the usual post-Christmas lull there comes news of some interesting new plays to be seen in the West End during the next month. They include *Breach of Marriage*, the controversial play about artificial insemination, previously banned by the Lord Chamberlain, which has already opened at the Duke of York's, *The Way Back* now at the Westminster Theatre, and, of course, the Laurence Olivier productions of *The School for Scandal* and *Richard III* at the New. On 24th January the striking production of Strindberg's *The Father*, with Michael Redgrave and Freda Jackson, recently seen at the Embassy, moved into the Duchess, and that solid success *Miss Mabel* crossed the road to the Strand Theatre on the same day.

Outstanding events during February include *The Heiress*, opening at the Haymarket on the 1st; a revival of *Widowers' Houses* at the Arts on the 2nd, and *Antigone* at the New on the 10th. *The Human Touch*, the new play by J. Lee Thompson and Dudley Leslie, which comes to the Savoy on 11th February, is concerned with Doctor James Simpson, of chloroform fame. Alec Guinness and Sophie Stewart are taking the leading parts. After a short provincial tour Margery Sharp's play *The Foolish Gentlewoman* opens at the Duchess Theatre on 24th February. The company includes Sybil Thorndike, Lewis Casson, Mary Merrall, Isabel Dean, Mona Washbourne, Nigel Green, Enid Lindsey and Eleonore Bryan.

The little Mercury Theatre at Notting Hill reopened on 24th January with Ashley Dukes' version of the Machiavelli comedy, *Mandragola*. A splendid company has been assembled, including William Fox, Michael Goodliffe, Patricia Hilliard, Hugh Griffith,

Geoffrey Dunn, Dudley Jones, Eileen Thorndike and Christie Humphrey.

On 26th January *Oranges and Lemons*, the clever revue starring Diana Churchill, Max Adrian and Elizabeth Welch, which was recently at the Lyric, Hammersmith, was transferred to the Globe.

The present season of opera by the Covent Garden Opera Company will come to an end on 5th March. During the last four weeks the Company will give some additional performances of *The Marriage of Figaro*, the first performance of which was on 22nd January. The repertory also includes such other operas as *Aida*, *La Boheme* and *The Mastersingers*, already well established.

Irmgard Seefried, from the Vienna State Opera, has joined the Company to sing in *The Marriage of Figaro* and *The Mastersingers*. Hans Braun and Marko Rothmüller are also guest artists during this period.

The Sadler's Wells Ballet will, on 17th February, revive *A Wedding Bouquet*—Frederick Ashton's work—which has music by Lord Berners and decor by Cecil Beaton. This ballet calls for a small chorus which will be provided by members of the Covent Garden Opera Chorus.

Margot Fonteyn, who injured her foot on the first night of the ballet season, will return to the company on 25th February, when she will dance the role of Cinderella in Ashton's successful ballet. This role was originally created for her.

At Sadler's Wells Theatre there will be a new production by Tyrone Guthrie of *Carmen*, which has not been seen at the Wells since the war. Anna Pollak will appear in the title role with Roderick Jones as Escamillo, Minnie Bower as Micaela, and James Johnston as Don Jose. F.S.

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New Shows of the Month



"September Tide"—Aldwych, 15th December. (See pages 13-20).

"High Button Shoes"—Hippodrome, 21st December.

"The Bolton's Revue"—Boltons, 22nd December.

"Jason"—New Lindsey, 28th December.

"Murder Most Foul"—Torch, 28th December.

"Hamlet"—Rudolf Steiner, 3rd January.

"A Pair of Spectacles"—Arts, 4th January.

"Harvey"—Prince of Wales, 5th January.

(Left):

SID FIELD

who has made a deep impression on his first appearance in a straight play. At the Prince of Wales Theatre *Harvey* is drawing big crowds and in the leading role of Elwood P. Dowd Mr. Field gives a sympathetic performance of great charm.

"High Button Shoes"

THIS is the London version of Monte Proser and Joseph Kipness's "new song and dandy show," which has had a success on Broadway. Over here Val Parnell presents Jack Hylton's production.

High Button Shoes, which is not to be compared with musical shows of the calibre of *Oklahoma!* and *Annie, Get Your Gun*, has this to recommend it, that it demonstrates once and for all that an English chorus can display every bit the same verve and vivacity previously thought to be a unique attribute of the Americans. It is indeed surprising that, apart from the two principals, who are American, the rest of the company is wholly British.

The story behind the show is extremely trite, that of some American confidence tricksters' activities, against an Edwardian background, and unfortunately there is a sad falling away in the second act. In fact most of the attractive musical numbers, including "Papa, won't you dance with me?" are in the first half.

Lew Parker and Kay Kimber are the stars and others who shine are Hermene French, Jack Cooper and Tommy Godfrey. But on

the whole, chief glory must go to the rank and file dancers and singers, who do so much to achieve an atmosphere of spontaneous gaiety and high spirits. Jerome Robbins' dance arrangements ("reproduced" over here by Fred Hearn) are an outstanding feature of the show, and Robert Nesbitt's general supervision does him credit. The costumes and decor are delightful and it is a great pity that the show itself lacks the quality merited by the real care lavished on the production. F.S.

"The Bolton's Revue"

WHAT is implied in programmes nowadays by this French word "revue"? A series of entertaining monologues, songs and dances? If this be all, the present one at the Boltons is sprightly and agreeable. If the word is still meant to imply any kind of survey of life outside the theatre, one may remark that this time focus seems to be upon the fast receding first quarter of the century. It has, indeed, for the middle-aged a nostalgic charm on that account. One of the funny numbers guys a concert party of 1922, thus dangerously inviting

(Right):

GWEN FFRANGCON-DAVIES

who has been absent from the English stage since 1942, returns in Terence Rattigan's new play *Adventure Story*, in which she co-stars with Paul Scofield. The play, which is presented by H. M. Tennent Ltd., and directed by Peter Glenville, opened a short prior-to-London tour at the Theatre Royal, Brighton, on 11th January.

(Portrait by Angus McBean)

comparisons. There were some excellent entertainers in concert parties in those days. There is some delightful dancing, arranged by David Paltenghi to music by Chopin and Schumann, "Reflets dans le Miroir," danced by Lisa Veronova, Marion Crawford and Larry Drew, and "Dreaming" by Aud Johansen. Benny Hill, for a comedian, has little to do but does that well. Marcella Salzer has two well contrasted numbers that are much appreciated, "Lady with Dog" and "London." Lucille Gaye is delightfully vivacious and wastes none of her material. Stanley Beard has a presence that gives value to what he has to say. Most of the lyrics are by Michael Treford, who has devised the revue. The music is under the direction of Ann de Nys.

H.G.M.

"Jason"

ADMIRERS of William Saroyan will enjoy the English premiere of Samson Raphaelson's play about a dramatist and his critics, *Jason*; others may be afflicted with stomach pains. A note on the programme links the characters with certain New York dramatic critics. This is interesting, if you care. It is important that you should care, because the characters have little reality of their own.

The central figure, who provides the action, is one Mike Ambler, a young playwright at the bottom of that literary class where Walt Whitman would be at the top. An aggressive parasite, bursting with conceit, he invades the home of Jason Otis, New York's leading dramatic critic, complains that it is stuffy and urges that a wall be knocked down. Something like that occurs without delay. Imagine Marchbanks with the manners of the Man Who Came to Dinner, a Candida who has achieved a successful marriage by fraud and, in place of Morell, the famous critic already mentioned. The play is not half as wonderful as that but it manages to suggest that. Michael Balfour plays Ambler and Patrick Barr, Jason. They do not convey the impression of tremendous personalities that one feels is required. Mary Laura Wood does well with the part of Jason's wife. Beryl Kelly, Reginald Dyson, Rex Garner and John Kelly all give good support.

H.G.M.



"Murder Most Foul"

MANY people, particularly in the amateur dramatic world, are keenly interested in the art of the One Act Play. I would urge them to visit the Torch during the presentation of Claude Purkis's three short plays. I would urge all who enjoy good acting in crisp, well constructed short plays not to miss these.

And in Death they were not divided takes us to Notting Hill Gate in the 'nineties. There is a grisly scene with a coffin—"Funeral Furnishings by" and "Harmonium by" are choice programme notes not often found—which is not only sombre, realistic, rather harrowing, but also darkly and penetratingly comic. Nothing is sacrificed for laughs, however, and the play ends on a deep, dignified and fitting note. Anne Blake, Judy Child, Eileen Adams and John Wynyard appear a perfect cast, but the lines seemed at one point (Florrie's retreat upstage to be precise), to be slipping away.

The Black Bag goes a little further back in time, to 1888 in Whitechapel Road, and introduces us to Harold Young, who makes a memorable thing of his performance in the part of Dr. Stanley. We watch this man fascinated and, whatever he says or does,



(Left):

PEGGY ASHCROFT

who stars with Ralph Richardson in the Broadway success *The Heiress* adapted by Ruth and Augustus Goetz from Henry James' novel "Washington Square," opening at the Haymarket Theatre on 1st February.

(Portrait by Vivienne)

"Hamlet"

THE First Quarto text of *Hamlet* makes a rattling good melodrama and it is an added pleasure to be able to compare it in action with the usual text, of which it seems little more than a précis. Here we have action, always action, and all the cackle cut. No poetry, no philosophy, no long speeches. Very much to the taste of the times. Having chosen a version of the play from which poetry is largely eliminated, it was a stroke of genius on the part of the Oxford University Players to dress it in the garb of our most unpoetic period. Or, desiring to put on *Hamlet* in 18th century dress, perhaps, it was a stroke of genius to choose a shortened version, full of action and short speeches. Either way, we must acknowledge a nice sense of what is appropriate. The production, by Ken Tynan, has the virtues and the faults of youth. It has freshness, enthusiasm and vigour; it has also violence and novelty for their own sakes. The treatment of glass stirred uneasy memories of Alastair Digby-Vaine-Trumplington; and the behaviour of those twin-like creatures, Gilderstone and Rossencraft, with naked rapiers had a dreamlike unreality.

The acting was spirited and vigorous. Though *Hamlet's* part is shorter than usual, it is still arduous. In physical and nervous force, Peter Parker, looking like Garrick, proved himself sufficient for this most exacting role. This version did not favour him. He would well have rendered the longer speeches of the usual text and it is to be hoped that we shall in due course hear him do so. The King was played with fine dash and vigour by William Patrick. He was every inch a Corinthian swell. The Queen, played by Joycelyn Page, made a trick entry tugged on by an Alsatian hound. She seemed as young or younger than her son, as in the recent film. There is some excuse in the present instance, but it will be a relief when this is put right again. Our old friend Polonius is called Corambis and is decidedly, as played with authority by Jack May, an old man to be held in awe—gouty, crabbed and caustic. His daughter, Ophelia, was obviously wanton and it seemed highly probable that the motherless daughter of so severe a father would be so. Evelyn Arengo-Jones made of her a very interesting Cressid, pouting and self-assertive, with over-worked eyes. Her mad scene was equally accurate and very moving. She skilfully depicted the

undoubting. There is not a scrap of quasi-scientific language, but what has come to be familiar to all as schizophrenia is here depicted though never referred to. The plot provides a plausible theory to account for the activities and disappearance of Jack the Ripper. Again, the end is darkly satisfying.

Mr. Purkis has the secret of these darkly satisfying ends. The last play, *The Tower*, provides another example of his skill. Here we see the seamy side of 1840 peasantry and are introduced to a character worthy to rank with some of the romantic malefactors of Robert Louis Stevenson. Evil-doing in aged people is so deliciously shocking on the stage that it is a wonder we do not get more of it than we do. Abiding in this *Tower* is a choice example—a gaunt old crone with staring, sightless eyes and a wonderful way with a rope. She is impressively presented by Caroline Keith. Her daughter and unwilling accomplice in crime is well played by Judy Child. Anne Blake is a very nice victim in every way. Again we see Harold Young in a sinister dual role—this one quite different from the one already praised in *The Black Bag*. This accomplished actor gives four distinct characterisations, since two and two make four, though he has but two parts. The author produced the plays. The Torch seems launched upon a successful season.

H.G.M.

overthrow of a shallow brain—the pitiful swamping of a light character.

There seemed little love between her and her oafish brother, played by Alan Cooke.

The ghost was a recognisable shade, a royal gentleman of that ghostly period, no goblin damned but an honest ghost. Played by James Lund, it rose from its tomb with eerie dignity and spoke rather beautifully with measured and hollow melancholy. Among the well-filled minor parts, Felix Waley's Georgian profile admirably suited both Gilderstone and the churlish priest; Robert Hardy had a nice blend of dash and drollery for the First Actor; and Derek Holroyde, realising that the First Grave-Digger's lines are not very funny, made a success as a brutal ghoul.

Now we come to John Slesinger's Horatio, who seemed not to be in the play at all but to regard it from a different plane, as if he had created the other characters, set them in motion and shaped their ends. He patronised the royal personages in a manner that would have been improper on a basis of common mortality. To deepen this Lob-like impression, he was in appearance an elderly German, a sort of toy-maker of Nuremberg. If this was the player's own idea of the part, it was pity the producer had not exercised his authority. If it was the producer's, well, well, another experiment, one must suppose. What was quite unforgiveable about this Horatio, a sort of ocular projection of his essential difference from the race of ordinary people, was his tonsorial solecism in wearing a beard with a periwig. This hurt.

The permanent set consisted of columns loaned by the J. Arthur Rank Organisation. Placed diagonally, the effect was novel, beautiful and dramatically effective.

Incidental music had been well chosen from Rameau and Couperin. Altogether, a most enjoyable and refreshing experience.

H.G.M.

"A Pair of Spectacles"

SIXTY years ago John Hare delighted London as the dual personality dominating Sydney Grundy's *A Pair of Spectacles*, and now, with all the charm of a Victorian music box, Alec Clunes revives the comedy at the Arts Theatre for Denys Blakelock. This actor, always revelling in parts older than his own years, has never been seen to better advantage than as lovable old Benjamin Goldfinch, who becomes a soured cynic when he borrows his brother's spectacles and sees no one in the world but knaves and tricksters. For our delight he alternates between moods of trust and suspicion with the ease of that well-known young man on the flying trapeze. To the last man the supporting cast captures the period charm of the play. One gratefully remembers David Bird for so keenly tempering his characterisation of the steely-hearted brother from

Sheffield; Avice Landone for her quiet impression of a dutiful Victorian wife; and Robert Rietty for showing us a personable young man of the 'Nineties and reminding us of an age when there was sufficient leisure to discover a beauty of language that nowadays too often lies hidden in simple everyday words.

E.J.

"Harvey"

THE situation behind this play is at all times better than the writing. That is to say it is to one's own imagination that the real moments of delight are owed.

All the same Mary Chase had a lovely idea when she envisaged Elwood P. Dowd, the lovable dipsomaniac and his invisible six ft. white rabbit, "Harvey," and we are duly grateful to her for the happy idea, especially when we are able to see that king of comics, Sid Field, and that most delightful of

(Continued on page 36)

"The Way Back"



A dramatic moment from Arthur Laurents' *The Way Back*, which opened at the Westminster Theatre on 27th January. Peter Daubeny is presenting this strong play with an all male cast, written around the experiences of American soldiers in the Japanese war. In the picture are seen Stanley Maxted as the Doctor and Richard Attenborough as Coney.

(Picture by John Vickers)

Theatre in the '49's

by GEORGE J. S. KING

THERE is encouragement for the budding playwright who is despondent because he does not meet with immediate success in the example of that great master of the drama, Henrik Ibsen. Exactly a century ago Ibsen's first book was published, but only 30 copies were sold, and poor Ibsen was driven by sheer necessity to dispose of the rest of the edition as waste paper.

It is interesting to glance briefly at some of the events in the theatrical world in that year of grace 1849. Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean were playing at the Haymarket; Sheridan Knowles, a once popular dramatist, was awarded a Civil List pension; the Olympic Theatre was destroyed by fire (but rebuilt and reopened in the same year); Dickens and a party of friends found the spectacular *Battle of Waterloo* production at Vauxhall tedious; and the future Edward VII (then a boy of seven) saw a performance of *Box and Cox* at Windsor.

The great French actress, Rachel, created the part of the heroine in *Adrienne Lecouvreur* that year; and her rival, Adelaide Ristori, achieved her first triumph as the heroine of Alfieri's *Myrrha*. Fanny Kemble, who had been giving Shakespearean readings in America, returned to the English theatre; and Jenny Lind made her "positively last appearance" on the stage, devoting herself thenceforth to the concert hall.

Theatrical jealousies are not, perhaps, unusual, but they have never again had such appalling consequences as one that reached its climax in May 1849. Be it noted, incidentally, that male not female actors were concerned! Edwin Forrest, the American tragedian, had bitterly resented his unfavourable reception in London some years earlier, and had, unwarrantably, attributed his failure to the jealousy of the great English actor, Macready. When, on 10th May, Macready appeared as Macbeth at the Astor Place Opera House in New York, there was a riot between the rival factions, the military being called out, and a number of deaths resulting.

Playwrights and actors alike were among the obituaries of 1849. Thomas Lovell Beddoes (26th January) was a notable poet, whose five-act drama *Death's Jest-Book* was produced after his death. James Kenney (25th July) was an Irish dramatist whose *Raising the Wind* introduced the famous character Jeremy Diddler, although it was said of Kenney by Byron that he "tires the sad gallery, lulls the listless pit." Horace Smith (12th July) was joint-author of the famous *Rejected Addresses*, and it is generally forgotten that this masterpiece of parody was inspired by the offering of a prize for an address to be spoken at the re-

opening of Drury Lane Theatre, after its destruction by fire.

Three famous actresses died in 1849. They were Mary Chambers, who married Edmund Kean; Anne Humby, who was said to be unsurpassed in "unrefined" roles; and Mary Ann Orger, whose London debut was as Lydia Languish in *The Rivals*, and who was said to have evolved a new technique in burlesque. Other notabilities who died that year were Jean Gaspard Deburau, the great French clown; and that erratic genius, Edgar Allan Poe, whose parents were playing Shakespearean leads at Boston at the time of his birth.

Space permits only a mention of some of the notabilities born in the same year. They included Frances Hodgson Burnett (24th November), whose *Little Lord Fauntleroy* was first performed at Terry's Theatre in 1890, and Joseph Comyns Carr (1st Mar.), who dramatised Hardy's *Far From the Madding Crowd*, was the author of several plays which Beerbohm Tree produced, and also wrote *King Arthur*, in which Irving, Ellen Terry and Forbes Robertson appeared.

Although William Ernest Henley (23rd August) is best known as a poet, he collaborated with Stevenson in *Deacon Brodie* and other plays, which were not too successful, but were influential in raising the standard of play writing. Francis Charles Philips (3rd February) was both a writer and a theatrical manager, and his *As in a Looking-Glass* was Sarah Bernhardt's first English production in Paris. That famous dramatic critic, Thomas Edgar Pemberton (1st July) collaborated with Bret Harte as a playwright, and was the biographer of John Hare, the Kendals, the Terry sisters, and Sir Charles Wyndham. Frederick Hawkins will be remembered as the biographer of Edmund Kean, and also as author of *The French Stage*, and founder of the *Theatre*.

Edward Rose (7th August) was dramatic critic of the *Sunday Times*, and adapter of stage versions of *The Prisoner of Zenda*, *Under the Red Robe* and *Vice-Versa*. Others born in 1849 were August Strindberg (22nd January), Swedish novelist and dramatist; Brandon Thomas, author of *Charley's Aunt*; Jean Richepin (4th February), French poet and playwright; and James Whitcomb Riley, the American poet, who began his career by writing plays for a theatrical troupe to which he belonged.

The year 1749 was one of bitter disappointment for the great Samuel Johnson, whose tragedy *Irene* was presented by Garrick at Drury Lane on 6th February. There were catcalls before the curtain went up, but the play then proceeded smoothly until, in the finale, the heroine appeared with a bowstring round her neck, ready to be

(Continued on page 12)

Whispers from the Wings

By
LOOKER ON

AS principal choreographer to Sadler's Wells Ballet, Frederick Ashton has kept a keen eye on audience reaction at Covent Garden during the past two years and come to the conclusion that ballet-goers prefer big-scale productions, comparable with *Aida* and *Turandot* in grand opera. He has the honour of being the first English choreographer to create a three-act ballet in the classical style, and because he believes a large house requires massive furniture, he adorned the stage of the Royal Opera House handsomely with *Cinderella* for the Christmas season. That the public approve of his choice is demonstrated by the fact that they bought out the house for the first 23 performances as soon as the box-office opened.

The choreographer's major difficulty in devising a three-act ballet is to introduce variety and keep the interest mounting rather than declining. Constant change and continual introduction of new characters is demanded on the stage. In *Cinderella* Mr. Ashton alternates between lyricism, sentiment and comedy, one sequence dissolving into another before it has time to outstay its welcome. In the comedy scenes with the Ugly Sisters, so humorously danced by Robert Helpmann and Mr. Ashton himself, mime is rather more important than dancing, but the fooling of these comic characters is far from haphazard. Every grimace and gesture is timed to the music, all set to accounts, like the steps of a waltz or a mazurka.

The henpecked Ugly Sister, danced by Mr. Ashton, with a nose grotesquely reminiscent of Ernest Thesiger's, is a rather pathetic character. Life has passed her by and she has obviously been eternally bullied by her sister, a dragon danced with such malicious relish by Robert Helpmann. One almost hopes that the slipper will fit her, so that she can escape from the unhappy environment of her father's palace to become a loving and devoted wife. Mr. Ashton's dancing, like the acting of Chaplin and the miming of Grock, brings us to the brink of tears. As Emyln Williams so rightly remarked, it would be impossible to learn more about the character, even if she had been set in a three-act play with pages of dialogue to speak.

When the ballet was devised, Mr. Ashton paid little attention to his own part. It was always intended that he was to be "a feed" to the Sister danced by Mr. Helpmann. Rehearsals proved so hectic and exhausting that there was precious little time to arrange elaborate dances for himself. His part was



FREDERICK ASHTON
in *Cinderella*

(Picture by Roger Wood)

practically evolved on the Covent Garden stage at the dress rehearsals, when he hit upon the idea of creating a bewildered character continually forgetting the steps of her dances. It was a masterly stroke, adding to the comedy of the occasion and intensifying the pathos of a wordless part that speaks volumes.

This major ballet was staged in just over five weeks. After working on blue prints of the Covent Garden stage and with model theatres in which the settings were built to scale, Mr. Ashton called the company and rehearsed intensively in the basement of the Kingsway Hall for three weeks. There each act was devised and measured to the music. Only the final rehearsals took place at Covent Garden. A masterly knowledge of theatre working conditions is required to accomplish such a feat, but having worked for Cochran and Julian Wylie in the past, Mr. Ashton has little to learn about backstage conditions and possibilities.

Cinderella proved an easier task, choreographically, than some of Mr. Ashton's recent abstract ballets. A story so helpfully engages the interest of the audience. In an abstract ballet the non-existent drama has to be created by the movement; the ballet has to be interesting in itself, or it soon becomes boring. As the public has responded

(Continued overleaf)

Theatre in the '49's (Continued)

strangled on the stage. She had two lines to say, but the audience kept yelling "Murder!" — and the unfortunate actress was compelled to walk off "alive"!

A publication that year by Johnson's one-time friend, the Earl of Chesterfield, was a reprint of his famous speech which characterised the Bill compelling theatrical managers to submit all plays for license to the Lord Chamberlain as an encroachment upon liberty. There died on 18th June Ambrose Philips ("Namby-Pamby") whose play *The Distressed Mother* concluded with what Johnson described as "the most successful epilogue that was ever yet spoken on the English theatre." Others who died in 1749 were Thomas Odell (24th May), who was another famous playwright; and John James Heidegger (5th September), who acquired the Haymarket, where he entered into operatic partnership with Handel.

Perhaps the year's outstanding bicentenary is that, on 28th August, of the birth of Goethe, author of several plays, although everything he did was overshadowed by *Faust*. On 17th January that year was born Count Alfieri, who was encouraged to take up literature as the result of the success of his tragedy *Cleopatra*. John Edwin the Elder, who was born on 10th August, was one of the most successful of comedians, and it was said of him that he "established

a sort of *entre-nous-ship* with the audience, and made them his confidants."

* * *

It is not often that a dramatic performance is the direct precursor of a rebellion. But it happened in 1549, when, at a play "in honour of St. Thomas of Canterbury" (staged in Norfolk), there was excitement which resulted in rioting. The rioting developed into the great Kett rebellion which, before its suppression, caused intense anxiety to the government of King Edward VI.

Whispers from the Wings

(Continued)

so enthusiastically to the first three-act ballet created in Western Europe since the days of Delibes' *Sylvia*, they will obviously cry out for successors to *Cinderella*. Maybe leading composers can be induced to write suitable scores, but at the moment most of them seem to be occupied with opera. Then comes the eternal question of a suitable story. *Robinson Crusoe*, which has a great attraction for Mr. Ashton, should make a wonderful ballet, with the port scene, the shipwreck, the war dances of the savages, and the return to peaceful England. It would make an ideal ballet scenario, and what theatre is better suited to such colourful spectacle than Covent Garden?

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Stella: How do you do . . . I'm Mother.

The moment early in the play when Stella meets her son-in-law for the first time. The action takes place in Stella's house on a Cornish estuary.

GERTRUDE LAWRENCE as Stella Martyn and MICHAEL GOUGH as Evan Davies.

“September Tide”

AT THE ALDWYCH

GERTRUDE Lawrence's return to the West End after an absence of twelve years is a notable occasion, while her brilliant acting in Daphne du Maurier's new play has brought her a well-deserved personal triumph. During the interim Miss Lawrence's rare gifts as an actress have matured, her charm and grace fill the whole theatre, and her command of the stage is superb.

In the exacting role of the young artist, Evan, Michael Gough confirms the great promise shown in *But for the Grace of God* and *Crime Passionel*, and Cyril Raymond as Stella's loyal though somewhat stolid admirer, gives his usual most able performance in what must be a very thankless role. Dandy Nichols contributes a lively portrait as a cockney “char,” and Anne Leon con-

veys very well the youthfulness and the essential naivety of Stella's daughter, Cherry. In the short time allotted to him towards the end of the play Bryan Forbes is splendidly noisy as Stella's son, the ebullient Jimmy.

Miss du Maurier, author of *Rebecca*, has written more into *September Tide* than may appear on the surface. That the play is splendid “theatre” could not be in doubt, but it reveals also a sound psychological insight, particularly into the mental outlook of the thirty-year-old artist, who finds his affinity in a woman a decade older than himself.

Irene Hentschel has directed the play with great understanding and Michael Ralph's decor interprets most effectively Stella's home-loving personality.

PICTURES BY ANGUS McBEAN



Stella : And it all happened so suddenly . . . Of course I knew that Cherry would marry. But not for years yet. So if I suddenly become hysterical, and burst into tears, you mustn't take any notice of me.

Stella, an attractive widow, and Evan have their first talk.

(Below):

Cherry : What's that you're playing? I've never heard it.

Evan : Not your vintage. Daly's, 1918.

Cherry (Anne Leon), ten years her husband's junior, does not recognise the old tunes Evan begins to play on the piano.

(Below):

Evan : Are you the landlord of the Ferry Inn?

Robert (Cyril Raymond) : I am not. My name is Robert Hanson, and I'm a very old friend of your mother-in-law's.

Robert does not take kindly to Evan's rather insolent manner.



(Right):

Robert: If Cherry and that fellow do decide to live here, and make it their home, indefinitely, and you get fed up with them, you know what to do, don't you?

Stella: Tell me.

For the hundredth time Robert proposes to Stella, and though she has no intention of accepting, it flatters the feminine in her to hear him say it.

(Below):

Stella: Things, and people, hurt so much when we are young, don't they? And then, as we grow older, the pain seems to flatten out, it doesn't mean the same. No more crying into pillows. No more stabs below the heart.

In the atmosphere of the old Daly's tunes the bond grows between Evan and Stella. The young man is drawn irresistibly by the charm and quiet poise of the older woman.





And after his eleven operation—what did your husband do then?
 Two months later Evan is hard at work on a portrait of Stella's daily woman, Mrs. Tucket Dandy Nichols—in the charming studio upstairs. Evan sleeps up here alone, with Cherry's seemingly nonchalant approval.



Evan: What are you doing? I've told you about
 my art.

Evan, who begins to display a proprietary right in his attitude to Stella, reproves her for carrying logs to the studio.



Evan: Don't move. Stella: What's the matter?

Catching Stella unawares when she is sewing, Evan starts work again on the portrait, which he is sure is the best work he has ever done.

Stella: You'd better get home quickly, Bob, before you're soaked through.

Later on when Robert pays a visit a storm blows up just as he is leaving.



Evan: Vous etes servis, madame. Bon appetit.

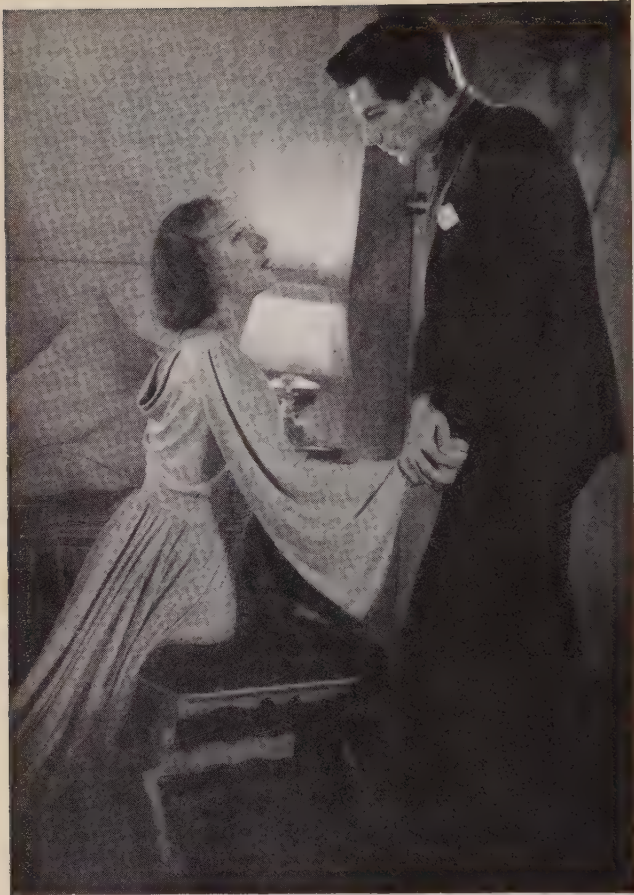
Evan, who during the last two months has developed a new charm of manner under the influence of Stella, prepares a delightful meal for her in the studio.



Evan: Looking at you from this distance, I can see a million things where I went wrong in that portrait. There is so much more light in your hair, and you've got less chin than I thought.

The moment when Evan and Stella realise they are in love with each other.





Evan : What matters, then?

Stella : Cherry matters. And the fundamental knowledge of what is right and wrong.

Stella reasons with Evan when he declares his love for her.

(*Below, left*) :

Stella : Oh, thank God . . .
Here, take this.

A few minutes later Evan goes out into the storm to secure the anchor of a drifting dinghy. Stella, knowing now how much she loves Evan, is terrified he may have been drowned.

(*Below*) :

Mrs. Tacket : Why, Miss Cherry. You're down bright and early. Did the sunshine bring you out of bed?

Cherry : Haven't been to bed. At least, not in this house. I was weatherbound last night, after going to the pictures, and had to spend the night with Miss Tremayne.

Cherry returns home next morning.



Stella: Cherry, what would you say if I told you I had made up my mind to marry Robert?

Cherry: Oh! No

In the light of day Stella begins to feel that the only safe solution to her problem is to marry the faithful Robert. But Cherry, innocent of all that has transpired between her mother and Evan, is appalled at the idea.

(Below):

Stella: I forget how to play when you are away so much.

Jimmy: Get Evan to give you a game, then, when I'm not here. He's terrific.

The situation is suddenly changed when Jimmy, Stella's young son, who is in the navy, comes home on extended leave with an injured foot.

(Bryan Forbes as Jimmy)





Stella : What are you going to do?

Evan : Give you back your peace of mind. Go away from here.

Evan, realising that his presence will only bring unhappiness to Stella, makes up his mind to go to America with Cherry. But Stella knows now that she could never marry Robert.



Evan : I don't make a very satisfactory husband, do I?

Cherry : I wouldn't want you any different.

Cherry reveals hidden depths of feeling when Evan hesitatingly tells her they are both going to America.



Stella : I'm ready, darling. You begin.

As Cherry and Evan leave, Stella turns back to Jimmy, overwhelmed by the knowledge that a great love has gone out of her life for ever. The closing moments of the play.

"The Wild Duck"

ST. MARTIN'S
THEATRE

Hjalmar: Oh,
Gina—Gina—
can you bear
it?

Gina: We
must help
each other.
Now, at any
rate, she be-
longs to both
of us.

the poignant
moment in
Act III after
the death of
Hedvig. FAY
COMPTON as
Gina Ekdal
and ANTON
WALBROOK
as Hjalmar
Ekdal.



THE *Wild Duck*, at the St. Martin's Theatre, has proved to be one of the West End's greatest successes. Presented by the Linnit and Dunfee organisation, without entertainment tax or State assistance, the play is also a commercial success. This version of Ibsen's classic is a new one by Max Faber, whose adaptation of Strindberg's *The Father* and other Scandinavian

classics we can look forward to seeing in the future. The star cast, headed by Fay Compton, Anton Walbrook, Mai Zetterling, Robert Harris, Walter Fitzgerald and Miles Malleon, is the finest in London and the sympathetic direction of Michael Benthall, the fine sets of Ferdinand Finé, plus the notable acting and Mr. Faber's brilliant version, make a visit to *The Wild Duck* a definite "must."

PICTURES BY ANGUS McBEAN



The party scene at the house of Haakon Werle, the rich manufacturer, at which Hjalmar Ekdal is the poor guest.



Werle : Mrs. Sörby can always contrive to slip out of the net—if she's a mind to.
Fill your glasses, gentlemen.

Haakon Werle (Nigel Clarke, *left*) and his distinguished guests drink a toast with Bertha Sörby, Werle's attractive housekeeper (Jane Henderson).

Gregers: When I look back on all you've done, I see only a battlefield strewn with broken lives!

During the party Gregers Werle, Haakon's son, has learnt from Hjalmar Ekdal of the struggle he and his father have had. Later Gregers confronts his father (a man now much sobered owing to the threat of blindness), who had been mixed up in the financial deal which wrecked old Ekdal's career years before. Humourless, and full of good but misguided intentions, the young man refuses to stay in his father's business and leaves his home bent on righting the Ekdals' wrongs.

(Robert Harris as Gregers Werle.)



Hjalmar, a struggling photographer, returns home from the party and gives an amusing account of the guests to his wife Gina (who had once been Haakon Werle's housekeeper), his daughter, a sweet young girl adored by her parents, perhaps more so because her sight is becoming afflicted, and his old father. He does not, however, tell them of the acute embarrassment he felt, particularly when old Ekdal, who had been giving some clerical assistance in an adjoining room, wandered through the room full of guests on his way home.

(Centre: Miles Malleeson as old Ekdal, and right, Mai Zetterling as Hedvig.)



Old Ekdal: I remember the bears—used to shoot 'em all hours of the day and night! Hundreds of 'em—I was a very good shot—I've shot nine bears.

Gregers is introduced to the Ekdal household and listens to the old man's childish talk of the old days and is shown the odd "forest" in the attic where are kept rabbits and the wild duck and where the old man and Hjalmar practice shooting.

(Below):

Hjalmar: Now I want the truth, Gina. If it was all over between you and him when—as you put it—you came to care for me, why did he do so much to help us get married?

Thanks to Gregers' interference, Hjalmar hears of the affair between his wife and Haakon Werle, and suspects that Hedvig is not his child.

(Below):

Mrs. Sörby: I shall never leave him and I can look after him and care for him as nobody else can—now that he'll soon be helpless.

Mrs. Sörby at the Ekdals' house tells of her forthcoming marriage to Haakon Werle.

(Left: Walter Fitzgerald as Dr. Relling.)



regers: But supposing you were to sacrifice the wild duck—of your own free will—and for *his* sake . . . ?

Hedvig: The wild duck!

Following his discovery about Ina, Hjalmar has gone to pieces, for not only has his self-righteous friend destroyed his domestic happiness, but by persuading him that he is not after all a brilliant inventor has undermined the other support which his weak nature demanded. Hjalmar has also turned against Hedvig, and when he leaves the house saying he will never come back the child is broken-hearted and a ready prey for Gregers' morbid suggestion that he should shoot her beloved wild duck to prove to her father how much she really loves him.

(Below):

Hjalmar: She'll come round in a minute. You'll see—she'll be all right—I'm sure she will—she'll—

The unhappy child, following the applications of Gregers' argument to the ultimate conclusion, in the end kills herself. The tragic moment when Hjalmar realises that Hedvig is dead. A moment towards the end of the play.





Mr. Darling . I shall pour my medicine into Nana's bowl and she'll drink it, thinking it's milk.
L. to R.: Eric Carr as Nana the dog, George Curzon as *Mr. Darling*, and Judith Stott as Wendy, in the Nursery scene in Act 1.



“**Peter Pan**”

● J. M. Barrie's immortal play for children has proved as popular as ever this year at the Scala Theatre, where Joan Hopkins, one of our most promising young actresses, was a Peter of rare charm.

After its season at the Scala, *Peter Pan*, with the London company, began a provincial tour at Hull on 1st February, after which the play will visit Manchester, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Glasgow, Liverpool, Newcastle, Blackpool, Leeds, Bournemouth, Dudley, finishing at Birmingham in the week commencing 18th March.

PICTURES BY
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(Left):

Wendy: Let me try to sew your shadow. I daresay it will hurt a little.

Peter: I shan't cry.

Joan Hopkins as Peter.



All : Wendy, say you're pleased.

Peter and the other boys of the Never, Never, Never Land introduce Wendy to the little house they have built for her.

(Below):

Captain Hook : Paw, Smee, Paw.

Forland Graham as Smee, and George Curzon as Captain Hook.

(Below):

Peter : But I'm not going with you, Wendy.

Peter and Wendy in "Our Home under the Ground."





Smee: Tie her up.
The exciting scene on the
pirate's ship.



Mrs. Darling: My children have
come home.

Mrs. Darling (Jane Welsh)
is overjoyed when she finds
her children back in the
nursery. A moment towards
the end of the play.

Right: Derek Rock as John,
and Michael Cleveland as
Michael.

"A Cup of Tea"

by

ERIC JOHNS

IF someone asked me for an impression of Gertrude Lawrence in four words, I should simply say, "A Cup of Tea." In Daphne du Maurier's *September Tide*, in which she is now appearing at the Aldwych Theatre, the character she plays is described in the dialogue as "a cup of tea," and that goes for Miss Lawrence both on and off the stage . . . always welcome, warm-hearted and refreshing.

On the occasion of her return to the West End after twelve years on Broadway, she had to cry in the play, and we also had to shed a tear in the stalls. As Stella Martin, the heroine of the story, she wept a little when she saw the portrait of herself painted from memory by her artist son-in-law. She explained her tears away by saying the canvas reminded her of all the things that used to be. That was why our eyes were a little misty, as she made her first entrance after so long in foreign parts. We remembered *Private Lives*, *Can The Leopard . . . ?*, *Red Peppers* and *Fumed Oak*. They belonged to another life and we wondered what might have happened to our beloved Gertie Lawrence in the meantime.

The moment she appeared we sighed with relief. It was the same old Gertie, as slim, graceful and sophisticated as ever. Here was a woman with glamour and one who knew how to use it. How could we resist a quiet happy tear? Any private fears or disappointments melted away. The theatre had preserved at least one of our pre-war joys in full glory. Her opening line, addressed to her newly-arrived son-in-law, "How do you do? I'm Mother!" was enough to tell us that we were in for a wonderful evening and that Miss Lawrence was in for a long run.

This actress has now acquired an American husband, but she has retained her British nationality and has been striving to play in London for some considerable time. As far back as the year Terence Rattigan wrote *Love in Idleness*, she hoped to come to London to appear in it, but the fates were against her and the Lunts took it over. It was a bitter disappointment, but she eventually played in it with John Loder last year at an American summer theatre. At one time she made plans to return as the heroine of *Lady In The Dark*, the spectacular musical which was written specially for her by Moss Hart and ran four years on the other side. The play demands four revolving stages, which rather limited the choice of theatres in the West End. As the only suitable ones were all enjoying highly



GERTRUDE LAWRENCE

(Portrait by Maurice Seymour)

successful runs, the plan for bringing it over had to be abandoned.

In despair Miss Lawrence came to London last summer to see what could be done about securing a play and a theatre, and also to convince us that her desire to act in her home-town was really genuine. She was handed a script by the Tennent management bearing the tentative title of *Mother*. The name of the author was kept secret until she had read it. She liked it and agreed to play in it if arrangements could be made. Then it was revealed that the author was Daphne du Maurier. The play has since been re-titled *September Tide*. She is so ideally suited to the leading part of the attractive woman who unwittingly fascinates her son-in-law that many imagine the play was made to measure for her, but her name on the programme is purely an instance of inspired casting.

The opening night was something of an ordeal for Miss Lawrence, as it is not easy to come back after twelve years' absence. Once she had spoken her first line she lost all sense of fear. She was conscious of facing a house of friends, delighted to see her back and wish her well. She only hoped she could get through the evening without breaking down and crying from sheer happiness. Looking back, she is now rather pleased that circumstances prevented her appearance in *Lady In The Dark*, as she was anxious to show London that she had grown up as an actress, since they last saw her.

In those Noel Coward one-act plays in which we last saw her in 1936 she showed signs of becoming a serious actress and since

(Continued on page 32)

Echoes from Broadway

BROADWAY seems to have spent the last month playing host to British actors and French plays. We have seen Rex Harrison, Joyce Redman, Martita Hunt, Jack Buchanan, Isabel Jeans and Cyril Ritchard among others, and plays by Jean-Paul Sartre, Jean Giraudoux and Sacha Guitry, but with the current box office slump which has given emphasis to the sad philosophy of the American theatre—a smash hit or a quick failure—only Mr. Harrison and Miss Redman seem certain of staying around any length of time.

They are co-starring (Miss Redman's first time at billing above the play) in Maxwell Anderson's fine historical drama *Anne of the Thousand Days*, as Henry VIII and the second of his odd assorted wives, the ill-fated Anne Boleyn, and they make a brilliant team, pitting their passion against each other with heroic grandeur that so befits their royal character. But the fact that they are allowed to operate on such a grand scale is, of course, due to the strength and scope of Mr. Anderson's script. For his story of the overwhelming desire of Henry for Anne, when her heart is given to the Earl of Northumberland, and the royal price of Queen that she puts on her body, only later to fall in love with her King and see him turn to someone else, with its final climax, a mixture of courage, pride, defiance and hatred, as she refuses banishment but accepts death so that her daughter, Elizabeth, might have a chance for the throne, is not only a passionate personal affair, but it rocks the kingdom and its people, as the church of Rome is defied and innocent, good men are sent to their death.

Only the language of poetry could do justice to this theme, and fortunately Mr. Anderson has that gift. He is about the only playwright in America who can write in verse, and what is more, make it pay, as witness *Mary of Scotland* and *Elizabeth the Queen*, but *Anne of the Thousand Days* is his greatest achievement in the field of historical drama. His verse has lost much of the flowery pretentiousness that marred his earlier work and now sings across the footlights sharp, clean, vivid and dramatic.

Curiously enough, this, the best play of the year, had a terrible time of it while practising on the road. Apparently everything that could happen to a play happened to *Anne*. Originally written in three Acts, the play called for about ten settings, complete with revolving stages, etc. When played under this set-up, it was discovered that the individual scenes were so short and the settings so lavish, that by the time the

audience were accustomed to the set, they had missed all the dialogue. This meant condensing the play into two acts and scrapping all that wonderful scenery from one basic set, and in the midst of all this, the director took ill, but this may have been a blessing in disguise, for The Playwrights' Company and Leland Hayward, the producers, sent a hurry call out to H. C. Potter in Hollywood, and that fine director came east to pull this incredible hodgepodge into award winning shape.

The only other play of genuine artistic merit to turn up so far, is the late Jean Giraudoux's delightfully sane and insane fantasy, *The Madwoman of Chaillot*, which is being presented in the magnificent mood capturing settings and costumes created by Christian Berard for the original Paris production. Written in a style that has been compared most favourably to Lewis Carroll, M. Giraudoux tells how the Countess Aurelia, a fabulous old bat living blessedly innocent in her sweet dreams of the past, is told by her friends, the small people of Paris, waiters, ragpickers, sewer men, etc., that the world has been taken over by the selfish and the greedy, specifically referring to a plot to tear down their Chaillot section of Paris because oil has been discovered running underneath it, and how this Madwoman of Chaillot takes the afternoon off, summons her sister crones, the Madwomen of Passy, St. Sulpice and La Concorde, and rids the world of all its evil parasites by following the simple method set forth by the Pied Piper.

As the Madwoman of Chaillot, Martita Hunt is giving a rare, enchanted performance, capturing all this good woman's bizarre quality, her old-world spirit with its pureness and mad humour, scoring it all with an infinite pity that stems from her ever present love for her lost lover of many years ago. It is a performance that has been widely praised, but somehow, we feel, not fully appreciated as the exquisite work of art it is, possibly because it is not set off with proper supporting players. Only Estelle Winwood as the Madwoman of Passy, who runs around with a Harvey-like dog, and Leora Dana, as a waitress touched with her first love, have caught with Miss Hunt the spirit of the script. The remainder of the large cast is hardly ever better than adequate. Clarence Derwent, for example, attacks his role of the villainous President with his usual amazing assurance but without ever convincing you that he fully understands the upside down logic of his lines. But whatever the faults of the pro-

BY OUR
AMERICAN
CORRESPONDENT

E.
MAWBY
GREEN



(Right):

Joyce Redman and Rex
Harrison in a scene from
*Anne of the Thousand
Days*.

duction, it seems a great pity that four of the reviewers could not recommend this fantasy to their readers, leaving producer Alfred de Liagre, Jr., struggling to get it on a profitable basis, while no more than two or three plays current on the boards can compare with it.

Jean-Paul Sartre's *Morts Sans Sepulture* (*Men Without Shadows* in London and *The Victors* here in Thornton Wilder's faithful and fluid adaptation) fared even less well with the critics, receiving only two favourable reviews, and will be one of the slough of quick failures, withdrawing immediately after its limited four-week engagement. Presented by that enterprising off-Broadway group, New Stages, who achieved a great financial as well as artistic success last season when they moved their production of M. Sartre's *The Respectful Prostitute* to Broadway, *The Victors* has the benefit of an honest, if not exactly uniformly strong performance, under the direction of Mary Hunter, who did a startlingly brilliant job on *The Prostitute*, and so M. Sartre's failure this time is essentially of his own making, and not the fault of his interpreters as in the current Charles Boyer vehicle *Red Gloves*.

The chief objection to the drama seemed to be that in spite of its macabre melodramatics, which showed members of the French Underground being physically tortured by their captors, the play was essentially a philosophical discussion of cowardice and pride and the meaning of life and death from a strong existentialist bias, and the intellectual and the emotional never fused into a dramatic whole. True as this is, *The Victors* still remains one of the few

provocative and stimulating evenings of the season, but again, without a unanimous press, the public preferred to pay for comedies only.

That last statement should be qualified to read "hit comedies only," for they certainly didn't pay to see Sacha Guitry's *Don't Listen, Ladies*, which gave up after only 15 performances. A current hit in London, it is hard for us over here to understand why, just as difficult, we suppose, as for you to understand the high regard with which everybody held *The Voice of the Turtle* in America. We have no theories or explanations; we can only report we found the endless talk on l'amour just as weary as everyone else and looked in vain for a few genuinely comic situations to develop.

One thing however is certain: the Broadway failure of this comedy cannot be blamed on the cast which Lee Ephraim and Jack Buchanan assembled in England and shipped over. Mr. Buchanan himself, starring as the harassed husband who suspects his young second wife of infidelity, the part which Francis Lister is doing in London, is, as you might expect, expertly smooth, and Moira Lister, as that tantalising second spouse, is a very lush and inviting young woman indeed, as well as a facile comedienne, but we were particularly pleased to see a good share of the applause from the press and public go to an old favourite, Ivy St. Helier, as the faded Toulouse-Lautrec model.

As if three French plays in one month were not enough, two American authors, Ronald Telfer and Pauline Jamerson, decided to take a typical French farce idea and see what they could do with it, under

(Continued overleaf)

Echoes from Broadway (Continued)

the title *Oh, Mr. Meadowbrook!* The unanimous opinion was "not very much" for after stating the premise—a meek, middle-aged Englishman (mousey Ernest Truex), without any sexual experience whatsoever, comes to America for his first fling—the authors hadn't the faintest notion of how to develop the situation with the necessary tortuous twists and turns that the late great French farce writer, Georges Feydeau or the current Jean de Létraz bring to their very similar situations.

This deficiency of the male hormone showed up again in Georgie Pilson, one of the characters in John Van Druten's *Make Way for Lucia*, which is based on the E. F. Benson novels. Georgie is a dilettante, 1912 vintage, affected, aesthetic and addicted to satin smoking jackets. He is also the funniest half-man to turn up in recent years as played by Cyril Ritchard. Fresh from his success in *The Relapse*, The Theatre Guild with a stroke of casting wizardry, decided to team him with Isabel Jeans, who had also just concluded a rather phenomenal engagement with *Lady Windermere's Fan*. The only trouble with this casting is that the actors' recent experience in Sir John Vanbrugh's and Oscar Wilde's comedies had them lavishing their superb comic style on a very tepid tempest tossed teapot trifle, making Mr. Van Druten's script seem even weaker than it was. There is nothing basically wrong, we suppose, in re-hashing the story of two catty women (Miss Jeans and not Cyril Ritchard but Catherine Willard) struggling for social supremacy in a small English town, but such old material demands that the author spike his dialogue generously with satire and wit, a course which Mr. Van Druten forsook for charm and pleasantries and so this \$60,000 production gracefully withdrew after twenty-nine performances.

This leaves only one more comedy to be taken care of: *Jenny Kissed Me* by Jean Kerr, which starred the best character actor on the American stage, Leo G. Carroll, but for only twenty times. As a crotchety priest who tried to marry off his housekeeper's niece by turning the Plain Jane into a glamour girl, Mr. C. won his customary acclaim, but the Kerr script refused to become another *Peg O' My Heart* or *Daddy Long Legs*.

* * *

Next month we hope to join the hat tossing for two new musicals, which have blotted out the feeble efforts of last year. There is a completely captivating intimate revue, *Lend An Ear*, with sketches, lyrics and music by Charles Gaynor, who has written some material for Hermione Gingold, although half the show's success must be credited to the young dancer, Gower Champion, who staged the entire production

besides contributing the choreography; and the big, handsome and wonderfully professional *Kiss Me, Kate*, which boasts one of Cole Porter's very best scores and is the hottest thing to sing New York since *Annie Get Your Gun*.

"A Cup of Tea" (Continued)

then, on Broadway, she has played serious parts in *Susan And God* and *Pygmalion*. This homing pigeon, so delighted to be back, wanted the public to take her seriously and to see that she had mastered new phases of her art. There is still time for us to see *Lady In The Dark*, but meanwhile we have acquired an actress second to none in the expression of quiet emotion . . . one who can gaze out of a window and say quite simply that she is watching the ferry, when in reality she is watching happiness slowly passing out of her life.

* * *

One feels very proud of our stage, after talking to Gertie Lawrence and sharing her thrill of being back home. To her the theatre means more than a handful of sophisticated West End successes within easy distance of the Savoy Grill. Her horizon is wider and her interests far deeper. She has not forgotten that she made her first appearance at Brixton as a child in the nursery scene of *Babes In The Wood*. She still looks back with affection on the days she spent touring all over the country, while still in her early 'teens, singing and dancing in such shows as *Miss Lamb of Canterbury* and *Miss Plaster of Paris*. When attending auditions she always had the courage and the optimism to answer in the affirmative to all enquiries relating to her acting, singing and dancing capabilities, and thus made her way to the Vaudeville, as principal dancer, and understudy to the ill-fated Billie Carleton in *Some*. Miss Lawrence refers to those former touring colleagues as the salt of the earth, never grumbling about their hard existence in rough and ready "digs" and even more primitive dressing rooms. As a child they looked after her as if she had been their own daughter. She cannot pay high enough tribute to their loving care or to the generosity with which they helped her to learn the tricks of their trade.

She is as happy to be back again as we are to read her name on the posters once more. There is a tonic effect about seeing her look so young and so little changed. Maybe she has that secret of eternal youth possessed by Mistinguett and A. E. Matthews. In that case we can be sure of enjoying her art and charm for many more decades, and her presence here might even inspire a major dramatist to write a play which will detain her on this side of the ocean even after *September Tide* has ebbed away.

The "King's" and the Coffee Houses

AN INTERESTING
GLIMPSE INTO
LONDON'S 17th
CENTURY
THEATRELAND

by

**J. A. AYTOUN
ELLIS**



(Right):

Dryden's house at 43 Gerrard Street, Soho, where the poet died in 1700.

(From the original drawing by
Gordon Ellis)

ONE afternoon in January 1665, Dryden, the poet and playwright, was seated on the balcony of "Wills" coffee-house. It stood at the corner of Russell Street and Bow Street, then the most fashionable part of London, only a stone's-throw from the King's Theatre, recently opened in Drury Lane by Tom Killigrew, England's first actor-manager. He it was whom Dryden expected as his eyes scanned the narrow streets below. They were to discuss the casting of his new play, *The Indian Emperor*, which Killigrew was to produce at the Kings in March.

It was most unusual at that time of year for Dryden to desert his seat of honour by the fireside, but this January weather was freakish, the air being still and stifling as it had been for some weeks past and as it was to be for many months to come.

At last Dryden saw his visitor approaching and waved a friendly greeting. Tom Killigrew was a man in advance of his generation. He was the first to employ women on the stage, an innovation not altogether popular with the one-time Commonwealth supporters who considered the theatre in any form distasteful and indeed, wicked. This revolutionary departure was to the Puritan mind both scandalous and revolting. Hitherto all female roles had been

filled by young men and, in regard to this, there is a good story of Charles II being kept waiting for the curtain to rise on *Hamlet* at the Duke's Theatre. Sending Lord Rochester back-stage to learn the cause of the delay, the latter returned to inform the King that "the Queen was not quite shaved." "Odds-fish!" said His Majesty, "I beg Her Majesty's pardon. We will wait till her barber has quite done with her."

Cromwell had closed all theatres and disbanded the players, but one of the first acts of Charles II at the Restoration had been to authorise Killigrew and Davenant to form two theatrical companies. The latter built the Duke's Theatre in Portugal Row, behind the present Stoll Theatre in Kingsway, and Killigrew's King's Theatre followed, a year later, in Drury Lane.

Killigrew had entered "Wills" and climbed the narrow stair, and, after a cordial greeting and the formality of a pinch from Dryden's snuff-box, they were soon engaged in earnest conversation. And there were many in that company of beaux and wits who would have given a great deal to overhear the discussion. For this was London's greatest "gossip-shop." Of all the coffee-houses that had sprung up like mushrooms since Pasqua Rosée opened London's first

(Continued overleaf)

The "King's" and the Coffee Houses *(Continued)*

one in Cornhill thirteen years previously, "Wills" was not merely "the vestibule to the temple of literary renown" but the very fountain-head of gossip, scandal and rumour in an age when news was picked up in conversation and passed on by the listener at his next port of call. This invariably meant at the next coffee-house; for if he be a painter or sculptor he would go on to "Old Slaughter's" in St. Martin's Lane; if a physician, he would consult with his colleagues at "Garraways"; whilst the lawyers favoured "Nando's" or the "Rainbow" in Fleet Street; the city merchants met at "Lloyd's," "Batsford's" or the "Jerusalem." Every man had his favourite coffee-house where he combined business with pleasure and where, for the first time, he could meet his fellows, discuss politics and the social evils of the day, or learn about the latest play or poem. Any man could gain admission by paying a penny to the lady presiding at the bar, the prototype of the present-day barmaid. Once inside the coffee-house he was privileged to sit wherever there was a vacant seat and to engage his neighbour in conversation. A printer's devil might find himself next to a belted earl; an illiterate apprentice alongside an eminent divine. Paying twopence for his dish of

coffee he was one of a great democratic company. If he did not wish to talk, he listened not merely to the small talk or to the libellous lampoons that were levelled against the reputations of the great, but to much of real profit to the mind.

On this particular occasion, however, he could not listen to Tom Killigrew's whispered conversation with John Dryden. It concerned a beautiful young girl who had recently entered his training school and who showed such remarkable talent that he had decided to give her the leading part of "Cydaria" in Dryden's new tragedy. The girl was Nell Gwynne.

At the opening performance of *The Indian Emperor* the King himself was present. It was in the afternoon, since there was no adequate artificial lighting in those far-off days. That indefatigable playgoer, Pepys, was almost certainly present, as he rarely missed such an occasion, and even if his interest centred more in the charms and contours of the actresses than in the play itself, history is grateful to the diarist for his valuable records of the Restoration period. Charles was completely captivated by Nell, who, for six years, was to delight the audiences at the King's Theatre in plays by Beaumont and Fletcher, Ben Jonson, Dryden and others before renouncing the stage for the doubtful privilege of being the King's favourite mistress.

A very different story to this may well have had to be told for, within a few weeks of Nell Gwynne's debut, a terrible calamity fell upon London. The stifling weather of the past months, unnatural and unhealthy as it had seemed, was followed by the Plague that carried off one fifth of London's population. The King and his court hastily left for the country and as the theatres depended almost entirely upon Whitehall for patronage, they closed down, Nell going to Oxfordshire.

But the coffee-houses for the most part remained open for the faithful few who never deserted London at that fearful time. The Great Fire that followed destroyed many coffee-houses in the City, but "Wills" was too far west to be affected and was happily still there to welcome the return of Dryden and Killigrew when all danger had passed. In December 1666 the King's Theatre reopened with James Howard's *The English Monsieur*. Back in London was Nell Gwynne to take the part of "Lady Wealthy."

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See page 38 for an attractive list
of books for those interested in
all aspects of the theatre



(Left): The exterior of the exquisite 18th century Drottningholm Theatre, beautifully situated in the park of the Drottningholm Palace near Stockholm. In the view of the interior on the right, is seen (*extreme left*) the screened box used by Gustav III on his unofficial visits to the theatre, when no one was obliged to acknowledge his presence.

The Story of a Famous Swedish Theatre

FOR a number of years in the 18th century Drottningholm was the centre of the theatrical and musical life in Sweden. The King inspired Swedish authors and musicians to create operas, while he also wrote the librettos for some of them himself. Moreover the standard was brought up to an international level by prominent visiting foreign composers and actors. Swedish operatic singers, German and Italian conductors, French actors, and a ballet composed of all European nationalities, filled the house. All these people lived within the walls of the theatre, where a large number of guest rooms had been arranged. Carefully elaborated regulations laid down the order of precedence, visible evidence of which was,

among other things, the number of bottles of wine bestowed upon each individual by his Majesty.

The shot fired at the masked ball at the opera in Stockholm on 16th March 1792 not only terminated the life of Gustav III, but also led to a dark period in Swedish theatrical life. The little theatre out at Drottningholm was forgotten and was soon degraded to a store-room for rubbish. Not until the 1920's was the theatre rediscovered and restored to its former glory, and on 19th August 1922, it was shown for the first time publicly, having in its earlier days been reserved exclusively for the Royal Family and the Court. This restoration was mainly

(Continued overleaf)

(Right):

A scene from a pre-war revival of the *rococo* vaudeville *Fiskarstugan* (*The Fisher's Cottage*), the work of the Swedish 18th century poet and musician, Carl Michael Bellman. The back-cloth is signed by Desprez, and shows the Royal Palace of Drottningholm.



Pictures by courtesy of the Swedish-International Press Bureau, (Stockholm)

The Story of a Famous Swedish Theatre (Continued)

the result of the unceasing efforts of Dr. Agne Beijer, Professor of the History of the Theatre at the University of Stockholm. Thanks to the neglect of the 19th century he found an untouched 18th century theatre, with the stage machinery in perfect working order and some thirty undestroyed sets of scenery, many of them signed by Desprez, the famous scene-painter at the Court of Gustav III.

In the 1930's performances were given now and then at the restored theatre, at first only for a specially invited audience, but later for the general public. These performances in this charming old theatre, played in the light of hundreds of candles, became enchanting events of great popularity. Moreover, an interesting permanent exhibition of old costumes, pictures, librettos, music, etc., was arranged in the foyer and the dressing rooms, a great asset for students of theatre.

During the war activities at the Drottningholm Theatre ceased, but have now been resumed.

New Shows of the Month (Continued)

"Harvey" (Continued)

comediennes, Athene Seyler, in the leading parts.

One can suppose that the author was having some gentle digs at psychiatrists and the running of American mental homes when she wrote the play, but in the end the emphasis is wholly on the irresistible "Harvey," who, thanks to Mr. Field, is to all intents and purposes entirely visible by the end of the play.

Elwood P. Dowd first encountered "Harvey" leaning against a lamp-post when he (Elwood) was presumably in a more than usually inebriated state. The invisible rabbit becomes his constant companion, much to the embarrassment of his sister, Veta, and his niece, Myrtle, who find their social position jeopardised by Elwood's eccentric behaviour. Veta schemes to have Elwood tucked away in a mental home, "Chumley's Rest," but when she confesses that she also once saw "Harvey," Doctors Sanderson

and Chumley incarcerate her instead. Elwood himself—not, of course, forgetting "Harvey"—sails through this difficult patch with the perfect aplomb of the confirmed dipsomaniac and the blackest moment for the audience is when it looks as though he will be given an injection that will restore him to complete "sanity." For compared with all the others in the play this character is so delightful and so altogether lovable that any possibility of change in him appears like a major tragedy.

In some quarters Sid Field has been accused of underplaying the drunkenness of Elwood, but this reviewer liked the restraint of his acting and the subtle suggestion of feyness which made the idea of "Harvey" all the more possible. Mr. Field is revealed as an actor of parts; his voice is most attractive and in the scene in which he describes his first meeting with the rabbit he reveals a wonderful sense of pathos. In view of the kind of role he was undertaking in this his first straight play he is also to be congratulated on his success in "keeping to the script." Only once or twice were we aware of the music hall artist in him.

Of the rest of the cast Athene Seyler was the one who gave a most outstanding performance. She carried through the weak opening of the play with great skill and in the second and third acts was at the top of her form. Jeremy Hawk and Ernest Hare were effective in the roles of the mental home doctors, and Henry Gilbert was very convincing as the brawny attendant. Violet Farebrother and Henzie Raeburn were other well-known actresses who appeared in smallish parts, and Diana Fawcett supplied the love interest. All honour too to Anthony Quayle for his brief withdrawal from Stratford to direct the play so ably. F.S.

Firth Shephard

The West End theatre suffered a big loss by the sudden death on 3rd January of Firth Shephard, at the age of 57. It was as a manager of musical comedy and farce that Mr. Shephard made his name. His former association with Leslie Henson was most successful, and in recent years he proved himself a shrewd man of the theatre in bringing over a series of American plays, *Arsenic and Old Lace* being the highlight.

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BALLET

(Above):

ALICIA MARKOVA

As she appeared recently in the *Casse Noisette* Ballet at the Empress Hall, Earl's Court. With Anton Dolin and corps-de-ballet Markova successfully broke new ground with this experimental season, and her enterprise was rewarded by an attendance of over 30,000 enthusiastic ballet-goers during the five performances.

PICTURES BY

MAURICE SEYMOUR, Chicago

(Right):

ALEXANDRA DANILOVA
and
FREDERICK FRANKLIN

who will be appearing as guest artists with the Sadler's Wells Ballet at Covent Garden during March and April. This is Danilo's first appearance in London since before the war.



GREAT UNIVERSAL STORES

RECORD TRADING PROFIT

The 30th ordinary general meeting of the Great Universal Stores Ltd., was held on 6th January in London. MR. ISAAC WOLFSON (chairman and managing director) presiding.

The following is an extract from his circulated statement:—

Your directors are again pleased to be able to place before you a report which, in disclosing the record consolidated trading profit of £2,928,448, will, I feel, be regarded as eminently satisfactory in its clear indication of the continuance of the steady and profitable progress of your company's business that has been proceeding in recent years.

I think it will be agreed the consolidated balance sheet provides impressive evidence of the magnitude and strength of the organisation controlled by your company.

The total net assets amount to £16,123,022, of which £7,133,193 is attributable to the interests of outside shareholders in subsidiary companies. The balance of £8,989,829 represents the net interest of The Great Universal Stores Limited in the Group as a whole. This amount of £8,989,829 is made up as to Issued Preference Capital of £2,250,000 and Issued Ordinary Capital as at the date of the balance sheet of £1,120,607, a grand total of £3,370,607 Issued Capital, together with the total reserves amounting to no less than £5,619,222.

The consolidated profit and loss account, which discloses a combined trading profit for the period of £2,928,448. After adding to the above dividends and interest received £55,967, profit on sale of investments £4,632, and interest on war damage claims £9,535, the total revenue from all sources is £2,998,582. The net dividend paid to Ordinary stockholders represents only a fraction over 1d. in the £ of the year's turnover of the Group. Such a modest distribution to stockholders therefore represents an infinitesimal part of the cost of goods to consumers and is small recompense for the risks of investment in these uncertain times.

In view of the results shown, your Board would have been fully justified in recommending an increased dividend, but, in accordance with the Chancellor of the Exchequer's call for dividend limitation, we are only recommending a final dividend on the ordinary stock of 27½ per cent., which makes the total dividend for the year 40 per cent., as for the previous year.

In previous addresses I have made reference to the service we provide in supplying a wide range of everyday essentials to the mass of the people, and I think our record of constantly increasing turnover justifies our claim to provide a service and value that is appreciated by our customers and meets a very real need. We are determined to be among the forerunners in reducing prices and increasing values to consumers.

The turnover and profits of the group for the current year to date are in excess of the same period last year.

The report was adopted.

DECCA RECORD

Improved Results

The 19th annual general meeting of the Decca Record Co. Ltd., was held on the 20th January in London.

Sir Cyril F. Entwistle, K.C., M.C. (the chairman) said that they hoped that the results, which showed a marked improvement over those in any previous year, would be considered satisfactory.

Since the close of the year they had received contracts from the Admiralty for an additional number of Decca Navigator receivers and the system had now been officially approved and adopted by the Royal Navy as a standard fitting. The fitting of merchant ships had continued, including the *Queen Mary*. The problem of "lane identification" had been successfully resolved and the Minister of Transport, The Rt. Hon. Alfred Barnes, M.P., had officially inaugurated the system yesterday (19th January) at their Master Station at Puckeridge.

To turn to the Record business, that had produced the excellent results that had made the finance of the Navigator developments possible. The turnover for the year had been considerably in excess of that of the previous year. Their main concentration had been in the export field.

In the home market they had been faced with increases in Purchase Tax on records. It was difficult to understand why that form of providing home entertainment and education had been singled out for such severe taxation, and should the tax be retained at the present high level, both the home and export trade of the industry might be adversely affected.

The Rights to manufacture and distribute Capitol Records had been acquired and the records had already met with widespread public approval.

The turnover of the company for the current year to date showed an increase over the corresponding figure for last year and, unless some unforeseen circumstances arose, the results for the year to 31st March next should be at least as favourable as those for the last financial year. Accordingly they had declared a first interim dividend of 20 5/6ths per cent., less income tax.

The report was adopted.

BOOKS ON THE THEATRE

OLD VIC DRAMA by Audrey Williamson

With foreword by Dame Sybil Thorndike.

"Most intelligent and thorough . . . a work of serious criticism, definitely one of the better books on the contemporary theatre" - *Time and Tide*

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Foreword by Sir Kenneth Barnes, Principal R.A.D.A. Sets for large and small stages for West End, Touring and Repertory, Amateurs and Church drama festivals, etc.

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These books can be ordered from the Book Dept., "Theatre World", 1 Dorset Buildings, Salisbury Sq., London E.C.4. All prices quoted include postage.

Amateur Stage

AS part of their Arts Festival at Leeds at the New Year week-end, the National Union of Students included some interesting dramatic work. Manchester University Union D.G. gave Farquhar's *The Beaux Stratagem*; Durham Colleges D.S. in Macdonagh's *Happy as Larry*; University College of South West of England D.S. in Shaw's *Arms and the Man*; Sheffield University D.C. in Cocteau's *The Infernal Machine*; Leeds University Union T.G. in Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*. Stage settings and costume designs were on display as part of the Festival, and Mr. James R. Gregson and Miss Esmé Church lectured.

Unity Theatre, London, in January staged a double bill, *Where's That Bomb?* by Roger Gullan and Buckley Roberts, and *Plant In The Sun* by Ben Bengal. Writing of the first play only, it can be said that Unity is maintaining its vigorous standard in acting and production, but whether such qualities are being put to their best entertainment purposes is debatable on the evidence of *Where's That Bomb?* Crudity in propaganda against wicked capitalism can be carried to the point of childishness, and also it is possible to be out of date by sheer over-emphasis. Unity's stagecraft continues its strong point.

The Taverners are touring *The Rivals* and *Dr. Knock* in the London area.

Celebrating Strindberg's centenary, Tavistock Repertory Co. will present *Easter* on 5th, 11th, 12th February.

Harrogate D.S. keeps in the news, and one feature is regional recognition of some of its players by the B.B.C. Broadcasting by amateurs is a decided encouragement to society and individuals.

Walthamstow Educational Settlement Drama School will present *Johnson Over Jordan* by J. B. Priestley on 3rd, 4th, 5th, 10th, 11th and 12th February. This play was first produced by Basil Dean at the New Theatre in February 1939 with Ralph Richardson and Edna Best, and original incidental music by Benjamin Britten. An unsympathetic press and enormous running costs caused the play to lose money during the beginning of the run, and it was withdrawn in spite of many requests to keep it on from people who had discovered its true worth by word of mouth. Here is another chance of seeing this unusual and deeply moving play.

This month's recommendation:—*That State of Life*, by T. B. Morris (French, 4/-) for its firm character drawing of a servant girl, in the period 1910-35, warped by convention, so that her natural brilliance turns to frustrated bitterness.

(Continued overleaf)

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Amateur Stage (Contd.)

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

All Through The Night, a comedy in 3 Acts, by E. Eynon Evans. One set, living room in a Welsh miner's home. 7 m., 4 w. French, 3/6.

Stagecraft For Small Drama Groups, by Grace Carey. Albyn Press, 2/6.

The Rose In The Cloister, and four other plays, by Margaret Luce. S. French, 4/-.

Through The Looking Glass, play, by V. A. Pearn, from Lewis Carroll, music by Henry Cyphus. French, 2/6.

Time and Mrs. Poddbury, comedy, by Mary Pakington. One act. 7 m., 4 w. Deane, 1/6.

Pepper and Sand, duologue, by Emlyn Williams. Incident of George Sand being interviewed by a reporter in London, 1851. Recommended. Deane, 1/-.

The Puppet Show, play in one act, by Myril Pitt. Deane, 1/6.

Call Back Yesterday, six period plays in rhyme, by Dorothy Law. French, 3/-.

Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, by Trudy West. Pantomime. French, 3/-.

Jack and Jill, by S. A. Polley and Conrad Carter. French, 3/-.

The editor desires to thank the several readers who kindly responded to last month's request for copies of the June 1943 issue. No more are required of that number, but if any readers have copies of the August 1943 issue in good condition, which they can offer, the editor would be glad to hear from them.

ITEMS

PLANs for the 1949 Shakespeare Festival at Stratford-upon-Avon, are significant for the inclusion of a team of producers and designers whose names are among the most famous in the contemporary theatre. Six plays will be produced by Tyrone Guthrie, John Gielgud, Michael Benthall, Godfrey Tearle and the Director of the Memorial Theatre, Anthony Quayle. Designers include Leslie Hurry, Tanya Moseiwitsch, Edward Craig and the internationally famous French painter and designer, Mariano Andreu.

Godfrey Tearle and Diana Wynyard are returning to Stratford for a second season after their outstanding success last year, and will be supported by Leon Quartermaine, Anthony Quayle, John Slater, Kathleen Michael, Wynne Clark, Harry Andrews and Clement McCallin.

The Festival will open on Saturday 16th April with Anthony Quayle's production of *Macbeth*. This will be followed by *Much Ado About Nothing* (Tuesday 19th April) produced by John Gielgud. The birthday play, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Saturday 23rd April) will bring back Michael Benthall to Stratford as producer, and he will also be

responsible for *Cymbeline* (Friday 20th May). One of last year's biggest successes, Godfrey Tearle's production of *Othello*, will be revived on Friday 17th June; and the last play of the Festival, Tyrone Guthrie's production of *Henry VIII*, will be introduced on Friday 15th July.

Cinderella, this year's most successful West End pantomime, will now close on 19th March, a run of almost three months since its opening on Christmas Eve, a total of 145 performances.

The 1949 variety season at the London Palladium will commence on 21st March with a bill of internationally-famed artistes headed by Eleanor Powell (the "world's greatest woman tap-dancer"). Also included in this opening two-week variety programme will be George and Bert Bernard in a new version of their famous gramo-mimicry act (which introduces their partner George Pierce in a new role), Josef Locke, the celebrated Irish tenor, and the Six Ashtons, sensational Australian acrobatic and "risley" act (first time here).

On 19th March, at the London Casino, Tom Arnold and Emile Littler will present a new Robert Nesbitt streamlined "musical" entitled *Latin Quarter* with an impressive line-up of internationally famous star-personalities, including Frances Day, Georges Guétary, Jack Durant, The Charlivels, Bartira, Willie Shore, Andre, Andre & Bonnie, and Elsa & Waldo.

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